

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY – JULY 9, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

The book of **Romans** is an epistle, or pastoral letter of advice. It was written by the Apostle Paul to the emerging Christian church in ancient Rome. It's considered his theological masterpiece in explaining how God in Jesus changes the world and invites us to new living. Chapter 8 is a resounding climax of the letter commonly treasured by readers. The epistles are theological arguments written in the style of ancient Greek rhetoric, rather than stories retold like in the gospels. We see this in large part in the words use to articulate point 1, point 2, etc. In our study sheet they are underlined at the beginning of each section.

the law of the spirit vs the law of sin and of death :: this is the key theological argument that Paul has been developing in chapters 1-7 of the letter. The law refers to the Torah, the teachings of Judaism that Paul asserts Jesus came to accomplish and fulfill, so that we would no longer be enslaved to the expectations and norms of sin – from which no human being can escape (3:27). Rather than pessimistic about the human condition, Paul asserts that we go a different way than God because of who we are, our natural inclination to idolatry, to want to worship ourselves, to put ourselves at the center rather than God. He talks through this in the opposition of law /FLESH versus Spirit/God. Paul says that it's impossible to escape this sinful nature on our own, it's only by the gift of God, grace known in Jesus the Christ, that we are liberated from such enslavement and incarceration.

OBLIGATED:: the Greek word ὀφειλέτης or /opheiletés/ means debtor, 1) someone who is indebted or owes another something (money, property, etc.); 2) one held by some obligation, bound to some duty; 3) one who has not yet made amends to one whom he has injured. In Biblical literature it becomes associated with one who has sinned against another: a sinner.

Abba:: the word is the Aramaic (spoken Hebrew) version of "Daddy" – indicating a relationship of intimacy and trust in God the Father. Jesus shockingly used this notion in his teaching.

Romans 8:1-6,9-31, 35, 37-39 NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION UPDATED EDITION

¹ Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by **THE FLESH**, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace....

⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are **OBLIGATED**, not to **THE FLESH**, to live according to **THE FLESH** — ¹³ for if you live according to **THE FLESH**, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, ²⁰ for the creation was **SUBJECTED TO FUTILITY**, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation

itself will **BE SET FREE FROM ITS ENSLAVEMENT** to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were **SAVED**. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also **PREDESTINED** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he **PREDESTINED** he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

31 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ...³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ...

³⁷ **No**, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- In this chapter Paul paints a picture of the purpose of creation; and the goal or hope of all of creation. What does that look like? What does God want for us all? What can impede or stop it?
- We're talking about REAL in terms of faith and church in our mission statement. How do you experience or practice the vision of this chapter as REAL? How do you struggle with that? Why?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – *or to us, as a church* – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

SUBJECTED TO FUTILITY :: the Greek word here is ματαιότης, /mataiotes/ which can mean vanity, or emptiness, as in aimlessness due to lacking purpose or any meaningful end. This gives the sense that all of creation was lost, off track, missing the target goal for which it was created.

SAVED [BE SET FREE FROM ITS ENSLAVEMENT]:: in Greek the word SOZO – means to save, to deliver (from bondage, slavery, certain death); it also means to heal or to make whole. We tend to spiritualize this word “saved” – but in the Second Testament it has a visceral, life-or-death existential sense.

heart(s):: in Hebrew the word LEB (heart) is not just the organ, but like in our culture today, the heart is considered to be the center of our being – the place from where all our thoughts, priorities, ethics and commitments come from. In Greek thought and language it's the mind [nous] that is this space at the center of our being.

PREDESTINED:: the Greek word is προορίζω /proorize/ which means to predetermine, foreordain. It comes from the root words of from πρό, "before" and *horízō*, "establish boundaries, limits") – properly, pre-horizon, pre-determine limits (boundaries) predestine – with the notion that it was done before creation came to be, that this knowledge, vision, purpose comes from the eternity that is God and where God has being. Look closely at what Paul is describing as pre-established before creation began. Is it certain people being saved? Is it that creation will be redeemed? Is it universal or individual?; inclusive or exclusive?